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Sephardic Jews in Germany

To the Editor:

In the 1930s when German Jews were trying to obtain immigration visas to other countries to escape Nazi persecution, they were told at Spanish consulates in Germany that, if they could prove they were descended from Iberian Jews who had been expelled from Spain or Spanish Portugal after 1492, then they were very welcome to return to the land of their forebears. Even as late as the 20th century, many German Jews were aware that one or more of their ancestors had come from the Iberian Peninsula; for example, the head of the Ullstein publishing house, Leopold Ullstein, the banker Max Warburg, the shipping magnate Albert Ballin, as well as the great German poet Heinrich Heine were able to trace their ancestry back to one or more Jews born in Seville, Lisbon, Porto, Toledo, and elsewhere (Kruse and Engelmann 1992). There were about 300,000 Jews in Spain and Portugal in 1490 (Baron 1967) who had to either emigrate or become Christians; the majority emigrated and settled, at least temporarily, in Muslim countries. In 1490 there were about 80,000 Jews in the Holy Roman Empire, i.e., Germany, Austria, the Low Countries, and Switzerland. When Protestantism became victorious in the north of the Holy Roman Empire, many Sephardic Jews left the Muslim countries, as well as France and Italy (especially Venice), for the north, at the invitation of the Protestant rulers there. Since they had knowledge of the Arabic number system, the most advanced Arabic medical practices, and,

usually, more than three or four languages, they were very welcome as physicians, jurists, bankers, and tradesmen. Even if only 10% of the original Iberian Jews went to Germany (many via Amsterdam, Venice, or Antwerp), they constituted in 1648 about 30% of the Jewish population. Since their standard of living and their practice of most medical advances were much superior to those of the Ashkenazi Jews, their percentage in the German Jewry must have increased until the German Jewry were emancipated circa 1848.

A survey conducted recently by myself among readers of the German-Jewish New York weekly *AUFBAU* revealed that a substantial number of its readers knew that they were descendants of Iberian Jews who had settled in diverse regions of Germany under Protestant control. Thus it seems advisable that, in genetic studies on gene geography, studies comparing Sephardic with Ashkenazi Jews should not include German Jews among the latter.

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Remarks on Constitutional 5q Deletions

To the Editor:

Lindgren et al. (1992) reported on three patients with constitutional 5q deletions, reviewed other similar cases, and attempted the delineation of two distinct 5q– syndromes: one attributed to 5q15→q22 deletion and seen in young or adult patients with a Gardner-like picture and the other chiefly due to 5q22→q31 deletion and seen in children. Unfortunately, the authors failed to quote a previous observation which had led to